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ABSTRACT

As older adult organizations stretch to meet the needs of a growing older adult client population, these Senior Citizen Centers, clubs and other programs are increasingly unable to understand and contol their internal as well as external environments. Organizational Development, a body of applied behavioral science techniques, can help older adult organizations become more effective by providing ways of building shared understanding of strengths as well as limitations. Because of the high cost of traditional organizational development programs, the community college is depicted as an indirect provider of the services to older adult organizations. By training voluntary community resources to deliver organizational development services, by integrating this effort into other community programs, community colleges can draw upon their own valuable, specialized competence to serve the older adults of our communities. Moreover, by developing this indirect role, it is asserted that community colleges can pursue a direction consistent with their desire to serve older adult agencies without diverting college resources which may be vital to other worthwhile programs. A model for the delivery of organizational development services through community colleges is described. (Author)

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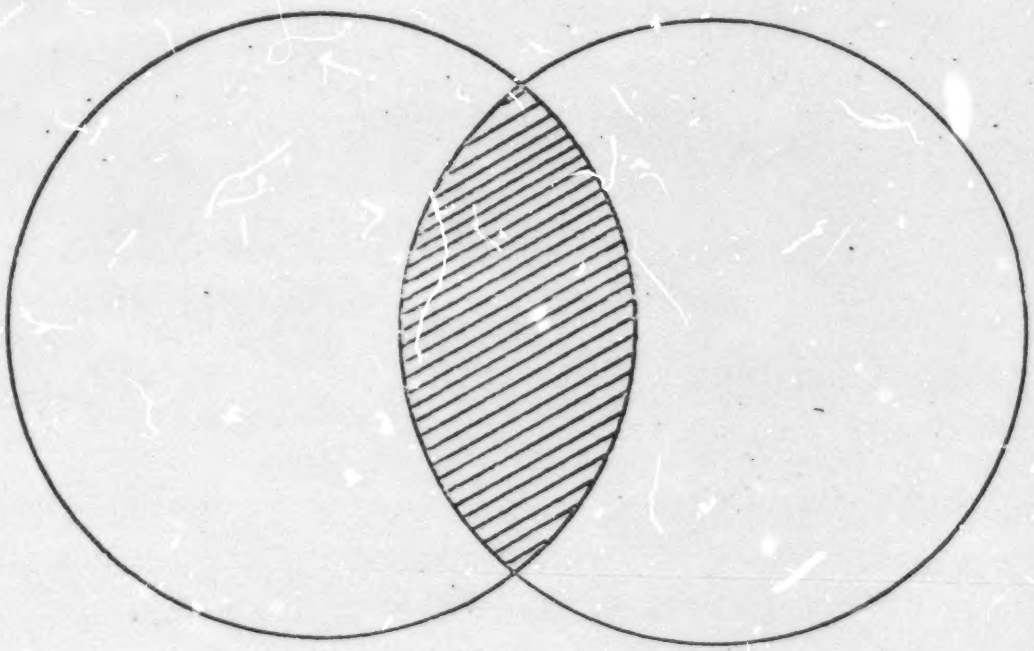
Help for Older Adult Organizations: Community-Based Organizational Development



A National Model Project in Aging undertaken by the Niagara County Community College, Sanborn, New York, and Funded by the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare

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CG 010 254

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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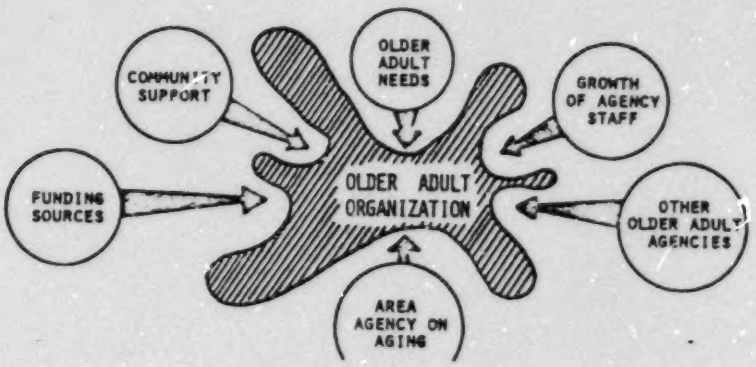
The Niagara County Community College, Supported by a National Model Project in Aging Grant from the Administration of the Aging, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, is developing a program which will bring low cost organizational development services to local organizations which serve the aging. A brief description of this program follows on the next few pages.

The rapid growth of older adult organizations in the United States has been a direct response to the accelerating growth of our adult population; further amplified by the increasing inability of family and public resources to provide for the physiological. social and psychological needs of the older population. These older adult organizations such as senior citizen centers and clubs have become the local deliverers of recreational, socializing and nutritional programs as well as preventive mental health outreach services. These programs have been funded substantially under the Older Americans Act of 1963 as amended.

However, as they have grown, older adult organizations have come to face a growing number of difficult problems. Their problems have been caused as much by their inability to understand and control internal growth and development as by their inability to sort out and influence other parts of the system which is attempting to deliver a variety of services to our older adult population.



Older adult organizations are confronted by a vast array of internal as well as external pressures.

Piecemeal, short term or ready made solutions to improve older adult organizations' effectiveness are of limited usefulness. In short, programs which are designed to improve older adult organizations but which do not help the individual organization come to grips with its individual, unique problems as an organization, cannot provide the assistance so vitally needed by our senior citizen centers, clubs and other voluntary organizations.

Organizational development (OD), a body of applied behavioral science techniques, can provide older adult agencies with directed, individualized assistance to improve their effectiveness. Generally, OD, which has been used in industrial and other settings since the early 1960's, helps older adult organizations become more effective by providing ways of building shared understandings of strengths and limitations; of providing the means by which organizations can improve their own capacity to improve problem solving as well as develop improved capacity to influence their own internal growth.

The central thrust of OD programs is the intervention process. It is during this process that consultants provide active assistance in helping to focus attention on organizational strengths and weaknesses in new ways. Using this intervention process, organizational development attempts to facilitate organizational improvement:

- *By encouraging the re-examination of past practices and current problems.*
- *By helping to clarify systems of authority, communication, problem solving and the needs of members.*
- *By helping the leaders of organizations develop a keener ability to construct and test innovative solutions for organizational problems.*

During the first year of our National Model Project in Aging, it was demonstrated that, in fact, OD can be very helpful in facilitating organizational improvement within older adult agencies. Using the Niagara County Community College as a base of operations and the College's Division of Continuing Education as a sounding board, selected older adult agency clients, including the Lockport Senior Citizen Centre, the North Tonawanda Senior Citizen Center, the Retired

Senior Volunteer Program in Niagara County and the Golden Age Clubs of Niagara Falls, received assistance in delevoping team and other participation building skills, program evaluation techniques, other leadership skills and conflict and issue resolution services.

A Problem: OD is Helpful, but Costly

While organizational development offers a vital means by which older adult organizations can be improved, a successful OD program requires a considerable expensiture of time and other resources. In short, because of its high cost, traditional OD programs are out of reach for nearly all older adult organizations. In addition, neither community colleges nor other institutions of higher education have the resources to support independently such a direct service.

Even though many community colleges have developed some capacity to sense both the needs of older adults and older adult organizations and have access to

professional OD consultants, in view of the substantial costs of traditional OD programs. the delivery of such helping services cannot be undertaken.

A Solution: Community Colleges as Coordinators of Low-Cost, Community-Based Organizational Development Programs

Rather than serving in the role of direct providers of organizational development services, community colleges, by means of the program we are developing in our project, will be able to serve as coordinators of community-based OD programs for older adult organizations.

The coordinating role in based on:

- *Community college competence in the education of non-traditional populations.*

- *Underused resources in our communities: active and retired managers, social service and other professionals, faculty, students and others with OD related skills.*
- *The availability of training support from industry and other local institutions.*

The work of our project includes the following tasks:

- *Identification of those community college resources which may be effectively used in training as well as service delivery roles.*
- *Identification of potential resources within the larger community.*
- *Creation and orientation of an OD Training Group which will design and deliver OD skill training to individuals who, with particular life-long skills already in hand, can easily take on the role of paraprofessional OD consultants.*

- *The actual delivery of OD services to older adult organizations by the trained paraprofessional CD consultants with professional back up.*

We believe that the program which we are developing can be instrumental in demonstrating the utility of using community colleges as vehicles for the provision of low cost programs designed to improve the effectiveness of older adult organizations. Moreover, the model which calls for the use of institutions of higher education as vehicles for the training of voluntary community people to take on paraprofessional roles within our communities may be equally instrumental in increasing the availability of trained resources which may provide a variety of needed services for a variety of organizations.

We are pleased to have presented our program, in brief, to you for your consideration. If you would like additional information concerning this project, please feel free to contact:

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